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BULLETIN OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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THE MUSEUM ANNIVERSARY

THE plans for the celebration of the Museum's semi-centennial anniversary are taking shape, and will be published in detail in the next number of the BULLETIN. The loan exhibition, which is to be made a feature of the occasion, and which was referred to last month, promises to prove of exceptional importance. It will open about the first of May.

There will be commemorative exercises befitting the occasion, at which not only the progress of the Metropolitan Museum will be recorded, but the progress of museums throughout the country, with a forecast of what the future has in store for them.

By invitation of the Trustees, the American Federation of Arts will hold its annual meeting at the Museum, and its sessions will be planned for the days immediately following the Museum anniversary exercises.

CONCERTS AND LECTURES

AS earlier announced, there will be a second series of free concerts in 1920, given by an orchestra under the leadership of David Mannes. These will be held on the four Saturday evenings in March at 8 o'clock, and on the same Saturdays there will be a lecture in the auditorium at 5 o'clock, by Miss Frances Morris, which will include descriptive analyses of the music on the program of the evening with piano accompaniment by Mrs. Henry L. de Forest and Miss Marie Louise Todd, and will be illustrated by instruments from the Crosby Brown Collection.

FOURTH EXHIBITION OF WORK BY MANUFACTURERS AND DESIGNERS

THE Fourth Exhibition of Work by Manufacturers and Designers showing the result of study of the Museum collections in the production of objects of industrial art with a current trade value, offers various side-lights on present conditions. Logically this exhibition should at all times be the most faithful chronicle of current events which an art museum can present. In the first place, the exhibition this year holds a mirror to unsettled social conditions resulting directly from the war and the turmoil of reconstruction which is the aftermath of war. Two aspects of these after-war conditions have, in a sense, militated not only against this exhibition in particular but against public taste in general. First is the problem of social unrest, finding its outlet in the complex of labor difficulties with which we are all familiar; second is the orgy of extravagance, which demands immediate deliveries of all types of industrial art, as it does of things of other kinds as well, allowing no time for study of design and barely time for good execution.

The labor problem affects the industrial arts in a direct way, especially because they all require the highest kind of skilled hands, in many cases with long periods of experience and education. The metal, furniture, jewelry, and printing fields were seriously affected, and in varying degrees the textiles and other industrial arts as well, at various times during the year since our last exhibition. In the metal trades, to cite but one or two examples, there have been

strikes of greater or less importance from February to December; the jewelers suffered a five months' delay for the same reason; there was a two months' strike in the furniture factories. This means, of course, a serious reduction of output, and that at a time when "produce or perish" is the watchword especially in the business field. The result was an unprecedented overcrowding of mills and shops to make up back orders with an extravagant public clamoring for its materials. As a consequence, the output of new designs was limited chiefly to shops dealing in special orders, where in turn the very production itself was the immediate result of the "drive" of buying which has been mentioned as a second factor working against the general advance in public taste. Special orders are in general practice made for immediate delivery and therefore but rarely available for exhibition; furthermore, they consist of single examples of a given kind and are therefore not typical of a general taste level, especially in a time of confusion like the present.

On the other hand, the era of large salaries for the worker has resulted in a high tide of buying in all fields. Stocks available were promptly exhausted, and, with labor difficulties at the same time in mills and factories of all kinds, new production could not keep pace with demand. It is therefore not surprising to be told by a leading textile concern that its looms are booked ahead until June of this year on orders dated last fall and that new orders just received and not even acknowledged through the mails will require all available looms until next January. And this refers to our own home conditions only. At the same time insistent demand from South America and from some parts of Europe—depending on the type of product—must likewise be satisfied.

These unsettled conditions disturb the average layman but little, it seems, for the unprecedented buying continues, designs which the manufacturer would otherwise have gladly consigned to the "morgue" of his forlorn hopes now find a market, the demand is for immediate production rather than for best production, for materials

rather than for design. Public taste is not only at a standstill, it is sliding downhill.

On the other side of the shield, however, are inscribed those hopes and positive values for which the Museum stands and in the maintenance of which it has played no small part. For the good of American design, we can record a greater number of manufacturers and designers than ever before to whom the Metropolitan Museum is a workshop; firms and individuals who do not feel the satisfaction of inspirational success in their works unless the Metropolitan Museum has had something to do with their design. Without them the period of reconstruction in America would cost us all the advances in design as applied to industrial arts which we have made in the whole period of our history—against what odds only the manufacturer can say. So while there are firms that say, "We are sold up until next year," there are others that say, "We have all we can do to produce our old orders, but we have just had some new designs made after a number of visits to the Metropolitan"; again while there are firms that say, "We are very busy with last year's patterns, people don't care, they want the goods now, so we have *no looms left for experiment*" (the italics are ours), there are others that proudly bring out of their cases samples of designs but a few weeks old, worked up in our galleries and say, "We must produce, so we produce better things; people want goods now but they will listen to the argument of better design if we take a few minutes to make it clear to them." We have not far to seek to find those that carry forward the torch. On the one hand, no looms left for experiment, on the other a sheaf of new designs with not a free loom in sight for months ahead, yet always an effort toward something better—and that effort always with the help of the Metropolitan Museum.

The Museum has created an era of good will among manufacturers, many of them far outside New York; it has convinced them that we are ready to help, that formidable exhibition of the finest things of all times is not the whole task of a museum, that it must teach and work as a part of its patriotic service. The Metropolitan

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Museum has assured for itself the consideration of producers of American industrial art as a laboratory of American design.

Due to demands for gallery space, never so urgent as this year, the industrial arts exhibition, which opened on March 1 and will be on view until March 21, has been confined to a single gallery (Wing J, Room 10), with the result that it became necessary to limit the number of exhibits that could be received from coöperating firms and individuals. The latter have, furthermore, been ready to indicate, as shown on the exhibition labels, the sources of their inspiration for the designs, motives, colors, etc., shown.

This practice was followed in the present exhibition in order to make clear to manufacturers, as well as to others, the various ways in which the collections can be made directly useful to them. The first argument to be presented is that of the cash value of design; no more convincing reasoning is needed than to show them the pieces on exhibition when this BULLETIN is published. These objects are of current manufacture, they are taken out of stock in hand, they are in some instances lent to the Museum for this exhibition by the owners who had bought them from the firms whose names are announced. In presenting such a collection of objects of current manufacture the Museum wishes also to express its gratitude to the manufacturers and others who have been good enough to lend examples of their skill for this purpose; they are doing a splendid work for the good of American design in presenting this concrete evidence of museum usefulness.

The exhibition shows that all parts of our collections have been used, and that this use has but rarely been in the form of reproduction. Copies are, of course, occasionally required and it is only fair to show that some people have this appreciation of good things of the past. Yet the majority of pieces shown prove that the fundamentals of design are the same in all crafts, that they are obvious to the maker of rugs though he finds them in vases, that they are discovered by the designer of costumes though she sees them in furniture. It is therefore no longer a novelty to those who

have to do with the industrial arts exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum to find an advertising design which originated in an ecclesiastical vestment, a furniture color which was found in Persian tiles, silverwork which saw its beginnings in carved ivories, a talcum powder box the design for which was suggested by Japanese prints, cravats which were designed after studies made in the armor collection. It is in these indications of real study that the work of the Associate in Industrial Arts offers a fascination and pleasure equaled only by that of the teacher who observes the opening of the child's mind, the inventor who sees his experiments give definite promise of achievement, the designer who traces the progress of his first conception through many stages and mechanical processes to the finished product sold on Fifth Avenue.

The Metropolitan Museum *has* a practical or trade value, it *is* an adjunct of factory, shop, and designing room. It is a working collection, a museum militant, and rapidly taking its rightful place as a workbench of American taste. R. F. B.

LECTURES ON ARCHITECTURE

OF Professor Fiske Kimball's course on Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic, given in the Museum Lecture Hall on Thursday afternoons at 4 o'clock, three lectures remain, as follows:

March 4 Eighteenth-Century Interiors

March 11 Early Republican Houses

March 18 Early Republican Interiors

On March 25, at the same hour, William Bell Dinsmoor, Architect to the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, will begin his course on The Culmination of Greek Architecture in the Age of Pericles. The division of his theme will be as follows:

March 25 Rise of Periclean Architecture

April 1 Periclean Architects and their Buildings

April 8 Principles of Design

April 15 Construction and Erection

April 22 Rebuilding the Periclean Monuments

These lectures are free to all without tickets.